Amendments to the Claims:

Please amend the claims to read as follows, and cancel the claims indicated as cancelled without prejudice:

1. – 39. (Cancelled)

40. (New) A method of identifying altered order critical data in a system for conducting electronic commerce over a public data network in which orders are placed by a customer using a computer, the method comprising the steps of:

transmitting an electronic order of the customer over the public data network from the customer computer to a validation server that validates order critical data included in the order, the validation server executing the steps of:

verifying said order critical data; and

generating an indication of the validity or otherwise of the order critical data.

41. (New) The method of claim 40 wherein the indication of whether the order critical data is valid or otherwise comprises an indication that the order critical data has been altered in the event that the order critical data is invalid.

42. (New) The method of claim 40 further comprising the step of the validation server transmitting the electronic order to at least one relevant merchant for fulfilment in the event that the order critical data is valid.

43. (New) The method of claim 40 further comprising the step of the validation server rejecting the electronic order in the event that the order critical data is invalid.

44. (New) The method of claim 40 further comprising the validation server executing the steps of:

generating a report including information indicating whether or not said order critical data is valid; and

transmitting the report to one or more relevant merchants receiving the electronic order thus enabling said merchants to identify if order critical data in the electronic order is valid.

45. (New) The method of claim 40 further comprising the steps of:

providing a commerce server for serving product details;

the customer downloading product details from the commerce server to the customer computer over the public data network; and

generating the electronic order using the product details downloaded from the commerce server.

46. (New) The method of claim 45 wherein said product details comprises the order critical data and wherein the order critical data is digitally signed with a secret key, and wherein:

the step of transmitting comprises transmitting the digital signature along with the electronic order; and

the step of verifying comprises the validation server verifying that the digital signature corresponds with the order critical data.

47. (New) The method of claim 45 wherein the order critical data is duplicated in said product details, which comprise a first copy of the order critical data in unencrypted form and a second copy encrypted using a secret key, and wherein:

the step of transmitting includes transmitting the encrypted copy of the order critical data along with the electronic order; and

the step of verifying includes the validation server verifying that the encrypted data corresponds with the unencrypted order critical data in the electronic order.

48. (New) A validation server for identifying altered order critical data in a system for conducting electronic commerce over a public data network in which orders are placed by a customer using a computer, the validation server comprising:

receiving means for receiving an electronic order of the customer transmitted over the public data network from the customer computer, said electronic order comprising order critical data;

verifying means for verifying said order critical data; and

indicating means for generating an indication of whether the order critical data is valid or otherwise, to enable altered order critical data to be identified.

49. (New) The validation server of claim 48 further including a report generating means for generating, on the basis of the indication generated by said indicating means, a report comprising information indicating whether or not said order critical data in the electronic order is valid.

50. (New) The validation server of claim 48 wherein the receiving means is adapted to receive a digital signature along with the electronic order, the digital signature being the result of digitally signing the order critical data with a secret key, and the verifying means comprises means for verifying that the digital signature corresponds with the order critical data.

51. (New) The validation server of claim 48 wherein the receiving means is adapted to receive duplicated order critical data comprising a first copy in unencrypted form and a second copy encrypted using a secret key, and the verifying means comprises means for verifying that the encrypted data corresponds with the unencrypted order critical data in the electronic order.

52. (New) A method of operating a validation server, in a system for conducting electronic commerce over a public data network in which orders are placed by a customer using a computer, the method comprising the steps of:

receiving from the customer computer over the public data network an electronic order of the customer, said electronic order comprising order critical data;

verifying said order critical data; and

generating an indication of the validity or otherwise of the order critical data.

53. (New) The method of claim 52 wherein the electronic order comprises product details obtained from a commerce server, said product details being digitally signed with a secret key, and wherein the step of verifying comprises verifying that the digital signature corresponds with the order critical data.

54. (New) The method of claim 52 wherein the electronic order comprises product details obtained from a commerce server, said product details comprising a first copy of said order critical data in unencrypted form, and a second copy of said order critical data encrypted using a secret key, and wherein the step of verifying comprises verifying that the encrypted data corresponds with the unencrypted order critical data in the electronic order.

55. (New) A method of a customer placing an order in a system for conducting electronic commerce over a public data network whereby alterations to order critical data are identified, the method comprising the steps of:

generating an electronic order including order critical data; and

transmitting the electronic order over the public data network to a validation server that verifies said order critical data, and generates an indication of the validity or otherwise of the order critical data.

56. (New) The method of claim 55 wherein the step of generating comprises:

downloading relevant product details from a commerce server over the public data network; and

generating the electronic order using the product details downloaded from said commerce server.

57. (New) The method of claim 56 wherein said product details comprise the order critical data and the order critical data is digitally signed with a secret key, and the step of transmitting comprises transmitting the digital signature along with the electronic order, whereby the validation server verifies the order critical data by verifying that the digital signature corresponds with the order critical data.

58. (New) The method of claim 56 wherein the product details comprise a first copy of the order critical data in unencrypted form and a second copy of the order critical data encrypted using a secret key, and the step of transmitting comprises transmitting the encrypted copy of the order critical data along with the electronic order, whereby the validation server verifies the order critical data by verifying that the encrypted data corresponds with the unencrypted order critical data in the electronic order.

59. (New) A client-side software product for use in a customer computer in a system for conducting electronic commerce over a public data network where orders are placed by a customer using a computer, the client-side software product comprising:

computer instruction code embodied on a tangible computer-readable medium for generating an electronic order of the customer including order critical data; and

computer instruction code embodied on said computer-readable medium for effecting transmission of the electronic order over the public data network from the customer computer to a validation server that verifies said order critical data and generates an indication of the validity or otherwise of the order critical data.